

April 6, 2004

Dear Commercial Razor Clam Digger:

A commercial season for razor clam digging has been approved by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for 2004. The commercial razor clam season is tentatively scheduled to begin Tuesday, May 18, 2004 and extend through Wednesday, June 30, 2004. Commercial harvest will only be allowed on the Detached Willapa Spits.

The season is contingent on acceptable levels of marine biotoxins. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) will test for biotoxin levels before and during the fishery. The season will open when DOH confirms that biotoxin levels are low enough to allow harvest. **Check the commercial razor clam "hotline" for to up-to-date information regarding sampling and test results: (360) 249-4628 ext. 262.** Any increase in biotoxins over established action levels will mean a postponement or cancellation of the fishery and may mean a product recall. Please call the hotline before digging to determine the status of the fishery.

In order to participate in the 2004 fishery, you will need Item #1 below if you work for a DOH certified company. To be able to purchase clams (either as an individual or company) all three items listed must be obtained.

1. **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Commercial Razor Clam License.** An application for this license is enclosed. *Each person applying for a commercial razor clam license must complete and sign an application.* The fees are \$130 for Washington state residents or \$185 for non-residents. License applications are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/razorclm.pdf>
2. **DOH Shellfish License and Certification and Inspection of your operation by DOH.** Contact Frank Cox (360) 236-3309 for an application and Plan of Operation Questionnaire if you or your company plans to be licensed and certified by DOH,
3. **WDFW Wholesale Dealer's License.** Contact WDFW Licensing (360) 902-2464 if you plan to buy clams and do not have a Wholesale Dealer's License. Only licensed wholesale dealers can purchase clams.

If you intend to dig for a certified dealer:

Contact a dealer certified by the Department of Health (DOH) and arrange to be included on the dealer's list of registered diggers. Diggers may register with no more than two dealers at any one time. Once a dealer(s) has agreed to register you with their company, they will submit your name to the Department of Health. DOH will then forward your name to Licensing at WDFW. Commercial razor clam licenses will only be sold to those individuals whose names have been provided by DOH.

If you apply by mail, your license will not be issued until your name has been received from DOH. If you plan to purchase a license in person, call WDFW Licensing at (360) 902-2464 first to confirm that DOH has provided Licensing your name.

Companies may add diggers to their Plan of Operation during the season but WDFW will not issue licenses until an updated list is provided by DOH. Diggers may change the companies during season but must follow the same steps described above.

Wholesale dealers must complete a fish ticket for *all* commercially harvested razor clams (WAC 220-69-240 or WAC 220-69-241) whether clams are sold, kept by the digger for crab bait, or intended for personal use (WAC 220-20-026). Personal use is limited to one recreational limit (15 clams) per day per digger and must be recorded in the "Take Home" section of the fish receiving ticket (WAC 220-20-026).

Diggers must carry their commercial license on their person while harvesting and while in possession of clams. Unlicensed persons are not permitted to assist with harvesting operations. The minimum age for licensing in the commercial razor clam fishery is 15 years.

The list of diggers for each company will be provided to WDFW Enforcement and dealers may be held responsible for digger compliance with all appropriate rules. Citations can be issued for violations of either WDFW or DOH regulations.

Diggers should also be aware that license fees cannot be refunded once the commercial razor clam season has been opened (even if only for a few hours or days). If elevated biotoxin levels force an early closure of the fishery, reasonable effort will be made to continue sampling biotoxin levels to determine when or if the fishery can resume.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need assistance. My phone number is 249-1221.

Sincerely,

Lorna Wargo

Coastal Shellfish/Marine Fish Biologist

cc: Dan Ayres
Captain Mike Cenci
Morris Barker
Licensing
Frank Cox, Washington Department of Health